

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-11 and amend claims 12, 13, 17, 23, 28-32, and 34-36 as follows.

Claims 1-11 (cancelled).

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): A method of forming a hidden, integral passenger air bag door in an instrument panel cover, the method comprising:

elevating a temperature of a vacuum forming tool to a predetermined temperature;
forming the instrument panel cover on the vacuum forming tool, the instrument
panel cover having an inner surface a first side and an opposing outer surface second side
defining a single uniform layer, the second side being disposed adjacent the vacuum forming tool
and the first side being exposed using a female vacuum forming tool exposing the inner surface,
elevating a temperature of the female vacuum forming tool high enough to form
the outer surface against the female vacuum forming tool, and
elevating a temperature of at least one scoring device greater than or equal to the
predetermined temperature of the vacuum forming tool; and
moving the at least one scoring device into only the first side of the instrument
panel cover to form at least one score in the instrument panel cover defining a deployment region
for an air bag cushion after elevating the temperature of the at least one scoring device, prior to
cooling of the instrument panel cover, wherein the at least one score in the instrument panel
cover is configured to allow the air bag cushion to open the deployment region along the at least
one score upon deployment of the air bag cushion forming a deployment region in the inner
surface of the instrument panel cover by contacting only the inner surface with at least one
scoring device after initiation of the formation of the instrument panel cover creating at least
one score therein at or near the elevated temperature from the female vacuum forming tool when
said at least one scoring device contacts the instrument panel cover, but prior to the cooling
thereof, the at least one score defining the deployment region and providing a weakened tear
pattern in the inner surface so that deployment of an air bag cushion causes the deployment
region to open along the at least one score for deployment of the air bag cushion.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The method as set forth in claim 12, wherein forming the deployment region moving the at least one scoring device comprises:

~~providing at least one scoring member which is extendable and retractable upon actuation of the device;~~

~~contacting the at least one scoring member with the instrument panel cover at only the inner surface thereof during the formation of the instrument panel cover; and~~

~~forming the at least one score by advancing the at least one scoring member device into the first side of the instrument panel cover a predetermined distance from the inner surface thereof, the advancement of the at least one scoring member device causing the instrument panel cover to thin out in predetermined locations which define the at least one score.~~

Claim 14 (Cancelled).

Claim 15 (Original): The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein the instrument panel cover is formed of a synthetic material.

Claim 16 (Original): The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein the deployment region has a shape selected from the group consisting of U-shaped, H-shaped, V-shaped, C-shaped, Y-shaped and I-shaped.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein the at least one scoring member device is disposed upon a cylinder which is actuated by an adjustment system for maneuvering the at least one scoring member device relative the instrument panel cover.

Claim 18 (Original): The method as set forth in claim 17, wherein the adjustment system is pneumatic and is controlled by an operator.

Claim 19 (Cancelled).

Claim 20 (Cancelled).

Claim 21 (Cancelled).

Claim 22 (Cancelled).

Claim 23 (Currently Amended): The method as in claim 12, wherein the weakened tear pattern of the instrument panel cover is configured to separate under pressure generated by an inflating air bag cushion which is positioned proximate the ~~inner surface~~ first side of the instrument panel cover.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): The method as in claim 12, wherein the instrument panel cover is formed of a synthetic material.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): The method as in claim 12, wherein the instrument panel cover is formed of a thermoplastic material selected from the group consisting of a polyethylene based polyolefin elastomer and a polypropylene based thermoplastic elastomer.

Claim 26 (Cancelled).

Claim 27 (Cancelled).

Claim 28 (Currently Amended): The method as in claim 12, wherein the at least one score is formed by advancing a contact edge of the at least one scoring device into the ~~inner surface~~ first side of the instrument panel cover a predetermined distance toward the ~~outer surface~~, the instrument panel cover being disposed in a ~~mold device~~ the vacuum forming tool.

Claim 29 (Currently Amended): The method as in claim 28, wherein the ~~mold device~~ vacuum forming tool comprises a female vacuum forming tool.

Claim 30 (Currently Amended): The method as in claim 28, wherein the predetermined distance of the at least one score is controlled by limiting the advancement of the at least one scoring device into the instrument panel cover ~~at the inner surface~~.

Claim 31 (Currently Amended): The method as in claim 28, wherein the at least one scoring device comprises a scoring blade which forms apart of a moveable cylinder, the at least one scoring blade being extendable and retractable relative to the cylinder, the cylinder and at least one scoring blade being orientated above the ~~body~~ instrument panel cover so that upon actuation thereof, the cylinder and at least one scoring blade are lowered to contact the ~~body~~ instrument panel cover and ~~form~~ form the at least one score.

Claim 32 (Currently Amended): The method as in claim 31, wherein the at least one scoring blade contacts the instrument panel cover to form the at least one score when the instrument panel cover is at a temperature wherein at least a ~~of~~ portion of the ~~inner surface~~ first side of said instrument panel cover is deformable.

Claim 33 (Cancelled).

Claim 34 (Currently Amended): A method for forming a hidden, integral passenger air bag door in a portion of an instrument panel cover, comprising:

~~elevating a temperature of a vacuum forming tool to a predetermined temperature;~~
~~applying a quantity of thermoplastic material to a ~~female~~ the vacuum forming tool~~
~~exposing an inner surface of the instrument panel;~~
~~elevating a temperature of the female vacuum forming tool high enough to form~~
~~an exterior surface opposite the inner surface against the female vacuum forming tool;~~
~~vacuum forming the thermoplastic material to the vacuum forming tool to form~~
~~the instrument panel cover, the instrument panel cover having the exposed inner surface a first~~
~~side and the opposing exterior surface an opposing second side defining a single uniform layer,~~
~~the second side being disposed adjacent the vacuum forming tool and the first side being~~
~~exposed; and~~

elevating a temperature of at least one scoring device greater than or equal to the predetermined temperature of the vacuum forming tool; and
moving the at least one scoring device into only the first side of the instrument panel cover to form at least one score in the instrument panel cover defining a deployment region for an air bag cushion after elevating the temperature of the at least one scoring device, prior to cooling of the instrument panel cover, wherein the at least one score in the instrument panel cover is configured to allow the air bag cushion to open the deployment region along the at least one score upon deployment of the air bag cushion forming a deployment region in the inner surface of the instrument panel cover by contacting only the inner surface with at least one scoring device after initiation of the vacuum formation of the instrument panel cover creating at least one score therein at or near the elevated temperature from the female vacuum forming tool when said at least one scoring device contacts the instrument panel cover, the at least one score defining the deployment region and providing a weakened tear pattern in the inner surface wherein the deployment of an air bag cushion causes the deployment region of the instrument panel cover to tear open along the at least one score for deployment of the air bag cushion, the deployment region being formed after or during the vacuum forming of the instrument panel, but prior to the cooling thereof.

Claim 35 (Currently Amended): The method as in Claim 33 34, wherein the deployment region is formed after the vacuum forming of the instrument panel but prior to the cooling of the instrument panel cover.

Claim 36 (Currently Amended): The method as in Claim 33 34, further comprising:

applying a foam layer to said inner surface first side after the forming of the instrument panel cover and the deployment region; and

applying a substrate layer to said foam layer, said substrate layer having a plurality of scores aligning with the deployment region.

Claim 37 (Previously Presented): The method as in Claim 36, wherein said substrate layer is formed by an injection molding process.

Claim 38 (Cancelled).